

# *This is A Few Forgotten Women Story*



*This story was written, in September 2024, as one of a series resulting from the 'A Few Forgotten Women Friday' collaborative research project, investigating the lives of pupils at the Royal Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb Poor (later The Royal School for the Deaf), Margate, Kent and The West of England Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Exeter, Devon.*

## **Anna Peach's Story**

Anna Peach (Hannah in some records) was born in Yeovil and baptised on 29<sup>th</sup> January 1831<sup>1</sup> at St John's Church in the centre of Yeovil. Her parents were William Peach, a baker, and Mary (nee Paul) who had been married just two miles south of Yeovil in the parish of East Coker<sup>2</sup> on 30<sup>th</sup> December 1808 (perhaps it is significant that they were both literate and signed the marriage register). When Anna was born they were aged 50 and 42 respectively and living on Park Street, where William was stated to be an inn-keeper. [In the

---

<sup>1</sup> Yeovil St John Baptism Register - Somerset Heritage Service; Taunton, Somerset, England; Reference Number: D\P\yeo.j/2/1/6 - accessed via ancestry.co.uk

<sup>2</sup> East Coker Marriage Register - Somerset Heritage Service; Taunton, Somerset, England; Somerset Parish Records, 1538-1914; Reference Number: D\P\cok.e/2/1/5 accessed via ancestry.co.uk

nineteenth century, Park Street and Belmont were known as the streets with the most pubs and beer-houses<sup>3</sup> in the town of Yeovil.]

They had also had a daughter Elizabeth who died shortly after birth in October 1829<sup>4</sup> when William was still working as a baker, but after the family had moved to live on Hendford in Yeovil. In the earlier years of their marriage, William and Mary had had several children while living at East Coker - Jane, born 1810, and Marianne (Mary Ann), born 1812, and both baptised on 18<sup>th</sup> October 1812<sup>5</sup> at East Coker. Jane married<sup>6</sup> James Singleton in Yeovil on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1832 at St John's Church, Yeovil, and Mary Ann married<sup>7</sup> Nathaniel Bartlett on 13<sup>th</sup> January 1835 at St John's Church, Yeovil. William and Mary's only son, William, was baptised at East Coker on 15<sup>th</sup> March 1818<sup>8</sup>.

The 1839 minutes of the Gentlemen's Committee for the West of England School for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb at Exeter record that "Anna Peach 7 years of Yeovil, Somerset" was amongst candidates for election to a place in the Institution on 7<sup>th</sup> January<sup>9</sup>. She was "recommended by F Popham, J.D. Acland Jones, R Ley, M Blake" with a medical report from M. M. Lambe and with the agreement of John Slade. M. M. (or Markes) Lambe was a surgeon in Yeovil and

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.yeovilhistory.info/park-street.htm>

<sup>4</sup> Somerset, England, Church of England Baptisms, 1813-1914 - Yeovil St John - accessed via ancestry.co.uk and Yeovil St John Burial Register - Somerset Heritage Service; Taunton, Somerset, England; Somerset Parish Records, 1538-1914; Reference Number: D\P\yeo.j/2/1/18

<sup>5</sup> East Coker Baptism Register - Somerset Heritage Service; Taunton, Somerset, England; Somerset Parish Records, 1538-1914; Reference Number: D\p\cok.e/2/1/3 accessed via ancestry.co.uk

<sup>6</sup> Yeovil St John Marriage Register - Somerset Heritage Service; Taunton, Somerset, England; Somerset Parish Records, 1538-1914; Reference Number: D\P\yeo.j/2/1/13 accessed via ancestry.co.uk

<sup>7</sup> Yeovil St John Marriage Register Somerset Heritage Service; Taunton, Somerset, England; Somerset Parish Records, 1538-1914; Reference Number: D\P\yeo.j/2/1/14 accessed via ancestry.co.uk

<sup>8</sup> East Coker Baptism Register - Somerset Heritage Service; Taunton, Somerset, England; Reference Number: D\P\cok.e/2/1/7 accessed via ancestry.co.uk

<sup>9</sup> Minutes of the Gentlemen's Committee 1837-53 DHC 7645C West of England School for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb. Accessed July 2024 with kind permission from Devon Archives and Local Studies, and from the Deaf Academy, Exmouth. Extracts transcribed by Helen Shields.

in the 1830s attended meetings of the Yeovil Vestry<sup>10</sup>, which would have supported Anna Peach's application to attend the Deaf and Dumb School. Anna would have been aged 7 when she started at the school in Exeter, but her name does not appear in the annual report<sup>11</sup> as one of the pupils "on the foundation" after January 1843. So, she may have left the Deaf and Dumb School around the age of 11, or she may have stayed longer on a partial charity or fee-paying basis.

In June 1841<sup>12</sup> Anna Peach [mis-transcribed Peech] appears in the census as a Pupil at the Deaf and Dumb School, St Leonards, Exeter, age 9, and not born in Devon. Her parents appear in the 1841 census<sup>13</sup> living on Belmont, on the southern edge of Yeovil - William was then described as a farmer.

Ten years later, after Anna had completed her education at the Deaf and Dumb School in Exeter, she too was in Yeovil again - at 21 South Street with her parents, William age 71 (a farm labourer) and Mary age 61. This 1851 census<sup>14</sup> record describes Anna as a Shoe Binder, age 20, "Deaf and Dumb". [Their surname in 1851 has been mis-transcribed on Ancestry as 'Pluch' and on Findmypast as 'Pinch'.]

It appears her occupation for a while at least was more independent and aspirational, as a Yeovil trade directory entry lists an Anna Peach as a

---

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.yeovilhistory.info/lambe-markes.htm> and <https://www.yeovilhistory.info/history%20-%20admin-16-18c.htm>

<sup>11</sup> Annual Reports DHC 7645C West of England School for the deaf and Dumb Annual Reports, 1826-1860 accessed July 2024 with kind permission from Devon Archives and Local Studies, and from the Deaf Academy, Exmouth

<sup>12</sup> 1841 England Census HO107; Piece: 263; Book: 23; Civil Parish: St Leonard; County: Devon; Enumeration District: 7; Folio: 14; Page: 23; accessed via ancestry.co.uk

<sup>13</sup> 1841 England Census - HO107; Piece: 958; Book: 9; Civil Parish: Yeovil; County: Somerset; Enumeration District: 5; Folio: 11; Page: 16; accessed via ancestry.co.uk

<sup>14</sup> 1851 Census Class: HO107; Piece: 1930; Folio: 305; Page: 23 accessed via ancestry.co.uk

‘Shopkeeper & Dealer in Sundries’ with premises on South Street<sup>15</sup> in 1852. Her father William had similarly been listed as a grocer, rather than just a baker, on Park Street in an 1840 directory<sup>16</sup>. Anna may have been trained as a Boot and Shoe Binder at the Deaf and Dumb School, as Yeovil was noted as a centre for the leather trade (particularly gloving)<sup>17</sup>, or she may have left the school in Exeter and been trained for work at home in Yeovil.

However, it appears that both her parents became ill in the mid-1850s because her mother Mary took the precaution of making a will, dated 8<sup>th</sup> March 1855<sup>18</sup>, before she died on 18<sup>th</sup> September that year (of Park Street, aged 64, according to the Yeovil St John’s burial register entry for 22<sup>nd</sup> Sep 1855). Anna’s father William Peach also died later in 1855, buried on 20<sup>th</sup> December age 75<sup>19</sup>. Evidently still a well-known figure in the town, his death was reported as “at an advanced age, Mr Peach, baker, of Yeovil”<sup>20</sup>.

In her will<sup>21</sup>, Mary Peach made specific provision for her husband during his lifetime and for her “afflicted daughter Anna Peach for the term of her natural life” in preference to any of her other children. Her will refers to an “indenture of assignment” for £200 made in 1827 - which was before Anna’s birth, so not influenced by her birth disability. Mary’s father John Paul, of East Coker, had died in 1823 and his will<sup>22</sup> left specific sums to his children including £200 to his

---

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.yeovilhistory.info/traders-bydate.html>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.yeovilhistory.info/where.htm>

<sup>18</sup> Somerset Heritage Centre - Estate Duty Wills - catalogue ref. DD/ED/1857/231

<sup>19</sup> Yeovil St John Burial Register - Somerset Heritage Service; Taunton, Somerset, England; Somerset Parish Records, 1538-1914; Reference Number: D\P\yeo.j/2/1/19 accessed via ancestry.co.uk

<sup>20</sup> ‘Deaths’ in Southern Times and Dorset County Herald 29 December 1855 0015 British Newspaper Archive accessed via findmypast.co.uk

<sup>21</sup> Somerset Heritage Centre - Estate Duty Wills - catalogue ref. DD/ED/1857/231

<sup>22</sup> The National Archives; Kew, Surrey, England; Records of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, Series PROB 11; Class: PROB 11; Piece: 1667 accessed via ancestry.co.uk

“daughter Mary, the wife of William Peach” with the condition that the bequest was for her “own sole and separate use and benefit notwithstanding [her] coverture”. This means that Mary’s husband William did not control her inheritance and matches precisely the sum of £200 which, according to Mary Peach’s will, had been assigned in 1827 to the solicitor Thomas Moore<sup>23</sup> to be used as “the said Mary Peach should direct”. In fact, Mary’s will records that by 1855 the remaining sum was £180, as £20 had been withdrawn. Possibly this amount had been used to support Anna’s education at the Deaf and Dumb School in Exeter and clearly Mary gave priority to protecting and enabling her daughter to live as independent a life as possible.

Mary Peach’s will was proved on 15<sup>th</sup> November 1857<sup>24</sup> by George Edwards, a draper, one of her named administrators and trustees - the other being Josiah Hannam<sup>25</sup>, an ironmonger, who was also a member of the Yeovil Vestry<sup>26</sup> and would have known Anna Peach since she was a child. By the terms of her mother’s will, Anna was entitled to receive “pecuniary aid” from the trustees if her father requested it in writing but, after the death of her father William, the “afflicted” Anna alone was to be paid the quarterly interest from the trust and was to be advanced portions of the principal money as the trustees saw she required (but not exceeding £5 per annum). Mary Peach also stipulated that, after Anna’s death, her son William and married daughters Jane Singleton and Mary Ann Bartlett should receive equal shares of the remaining money but, if William predeceased Anna, Jane and Mary Ann should receive equal shares (that is, in preference to any of William’s descendants).

---

<sup>23</sup> A solicitor of West Coker who moved to Yeovil before 1839 [www.yeovilhistory.info/moore-thomas.htm](http://www.yeovilhistory.info/moore-thomas.htm)

<sup>24</sup> Somerset Heritage Centre - Estate Duty Wills - catalogue ref. DD/ED/1857/231

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.yeovilhistory.info/hannam.htm>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.yeovilhistory.info/history%20-%20admin-16-18c.htm>

It seems that Anna did not rely entirely on income from her mother's trust, as her occupation was stated to be a Boot and Shoe Binder in both the 1861<sup>27</sup> and 1871<sup>28</sup> censuses. In 1861 she was a lodger, age 31, with George and Eliza Payne (Tailor and Dressmaker) on Park Street in Yeovil and in 1871 she was a lodger, age 41, still living on Park Street but with an elderly couple, Henry (a newsagent) and Ann Foot. In this census she was described as simply "Dumb from Birth", suggesting that she had minimised the impact of deafness on her life.

However, in the 1881 Census<sup>29</sup> Anna Peach was a boarder, age 50, living with widow Elizabeth Snook and her daughter at 49 Park Street, Yeovil, and for the first time simply acknowledged to be reliant on her mother's financial provision for her and described as an "Annuitant" – "Deaf and Dumb since Birth".

Anna Peach died in Yeovil in 1890<sup>30</sup>, her age recorded as 65, and apparently having lived independently rather than being looked after by any of her older siblings. (Her sister Jane had died in 1867<sup>31</sup> and her widowed sister Mary Ann had moved to Southampton before her death in 1892<sup>32</sup>). Her burial<sup>33</sup> on 15<sup>th</sup> May 1890 (when her address was given as Sherborne Road, Yeovil) is recorded in the register of Holy Trinity Church<sup>34</sup>, but like her sisters she was actually interred in Yeovil Cemetery<sup>35</sup>.

*Celia Mycock*

---

<sup>27</sup> 1861 England Census - RG 9; Piece: 1644; Folio: 52; Page: 8 – accessed via [ancestry.co.uk](https://ancestry.co.uk)

<sup>28</sup> 1871 England Census - RG10; Piece: 2419; Folio: 6; Page: 3 – accessed via [ancestry.co.uk](https://ancestry.co.uk)

<sup>29</sup> 1881 England Census - RG11; Piece: 2393; Folio: 43; Page: 20; accessed via [ancestry.co.uk](https://ancestry.co.uk)

<sup>30</sup> Free BMD GRO Deaths Q Jun 1890 - Vol 5c Page 313

<sup>31</sup> Jane Singleton age 56 Q Sep 1867 Yeovil - Vol 5c Page 300

<sup>32</sup> Yeovil St John Burial Register - Somerset Heritage Service; Taunton, Somerset, England; Somerset Parish Records, 1538-1914; Reference Number: D\P\yeo.j/2/1/20

<sup>33</sup> Yeovil Holy Trinity, Burial Register - Yeovil, Somerset". *FreeREG Parish Register* database [https://www.freereg.org.uk/search\\_records/58190043e93790de6a53724c](https://www.freereg.org.uk/search_records/58190043e93790de6a53724c).

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.yeovilhistory.info/holytrinity.htm>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.yeovilhistory.info/cemetery.htm>